

DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION

In order to accomplish its mission, the Ad Hoc Committee on Best Practices In Northampton Decision-Making (herein after, Best Practices Committee, or The Committee) intends to follow this Plan of Action, which may be modified from time to time, to meet particular circumstances.

All meetings of the Committee shall be publicized and shall be open to the public. To the greatest extent possible, the Committee meetings will be televised.

The Committee embraces and enthusiastically supports the concept of inclusiveness in the decision-making process. To that end, in addition to widely publicizing all aspects of its proceedings, which members of the public are encouraged to attend, the Committee will reach out to groups and individuals who may not have felt included in the past.

An important component of the Committee's work will be to establish a model within which the legal obligations, rights and privileges of all parties will be recognized and respected.

STEP ONE: DISCOVERY:

The Committee, and its subcommittees shall conduct research into the decision-making procedures of various departments, boards and agencies of the City of Northampton, in order to determine how decisions are currently made, the types and categories of decisions each entity makes, and to determine to what extent public input would be appropriate regarding the various types of decisions. In addition, the Committee, or its subcommittees will research any legal requirements that must be accommodated in the decision-making process of each department, or agency, such as, but not limited to zoning ordinances, wetlands regulations, and local, state and federal laws.

Such research will include meeting with the City's department and agency heads. In addition, the Committee, or its subcommittees, will investigate the best practices procedures of other communities.

The Committee will also seek to learn how each entity advises the public of pending decisions which warrant public comment, and what procedures are used to provide for public participation.

The Committee will invite members of the public to appear before it at open meetings to express their concerns and ideas on how best to optimize public participation.

The Committee, or its sub-committees, shall conduct an outreach program, which may include members of the Committee or subcommittees meeting with citizen groups at various locations, such as, but not limited to, the facilities of agencies that service the various segments of the City's population, at public housing facilities, senior citizen centers, and cultural organizations.

STEP TWO: DELIBERATION:

In meetings opened to the public, the Committee will analyze the data obtained during the discovery process, and as a result of the individual research conducted by Committee members, or by subcommittees, as provided for in the enabling resolution. Based on those deliberations, a Report of Preliminary Findings shall be prepared by the Committee and submitted to the City Council and made available to the public.

STEP THREE: NINETY DAY PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD:

The Committee shall present its preliminary findings to the Community, to seek its views and suggestions.

STEP FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINAL REPORT :

On March 5, 2009 the Committee shall present its final report to the City Council .